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VICTORIA.

REPORT

ON THE

BOTANIC GARDEN,

MELBOURNE.

BY DR. FERDINAND MUELLER.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.

By Authority:

JOHN FERRES, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

No. 81. a.

Melbourne Botanic Garden,
25th August, 1857.

Sir,

I do myself the honor of transmitting a brief report on the present state of the Botanic Garden. It will not be without difficulty to report fully on the labors performed on this establishment during previous years, my functions formerly on this garden being very limited, whilst my absence from Victoria during Mr. Gregory's expedition, renders it somewhat difficult to collect accurate information on the labors in this garden during that period. If, however, such information is deemed desirable, I will endeavor to furnish it at an early period. It remains to be observed, that the enclosed report does in no way bear upon my labors in the capacity of Colonial Botanist, but that in a distinct document at the close of the year information will be furnished of my progress in that direction.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient and humble servant,

FERD. MUELLER.

The Honorable the President of the Board of
Land and Works, &c., &c., &c.

REPORT ON THE BOTANIC GARDEN.

Melbourne Botanic Garden,
25th August, 1857.

Sir,

In compliance with your request, I have the honor of transmitting a general report on the present state of the Botanic Garden, and on the progress of the labors in this establishment during the current year, and I also beg leave to add on this occasion an outline of our proposed future operations.

Of the total area of the Gardens, which contain, exclusive of the lagoon, about forty-three acres, approximately fourteen acres are at present under cultivation.

With a view of rendering the Botanic Garden mainly attractive to the public as a place of recreation, the Curator has been endeavoring to increase, by ornamental plantations, the natural beauty of the spot, and the taste displayed in his arrangements has not failed to secure the approbation of numerous visitors.

During the year 1856 scarcely any additional ground could be devoted to cultivation, owing principally to the limited funds available at the time for wages, and the necessary retrenchments of 1855 reduced the number of laborers for many months even to five and six.

The liberal votes of the Legislature enabled the Curator to extend his operations in this season considerably over new ground, and under the approval of the Honorable the Chief Commissioner of Public Works additional garden walks have been fixed, the main lines with a breadth of sixteen feet, the remainder chiefly twelve feet broad.

The extent of walks finished in former years amounts to 159 chains. Other lines, to the extent of forty chains, remained without a gravel layer. New walks have been formed to the extent of ninety-two chains, and will be finished, at least partially, during the present year. To level the walks, to bring the slopes of the culture-ground to an equal declivity, and to remove the gravel superincumbent to the sandy argillaceous subsoil, was to be accomplished on all undulating ground only by a great amount of labor.

According to the catalogue issued at the beginning of this year, and to an unpublished supplement comprising our latest introductions, the actual number of plants established in this Garden, up to the present day, amounts to about 1600 species. To these are to be added a number of varieties and hybrid plants, which, although not deserving a place in the catalogue,

enhance the beauty of the Garden. An important addition to this number is to be expected from a great variety of seeds (exceeding 1000 species) sown during this season. These include contributions from Mr. John Bailey, of Adelaide; Dr. Barker, Mrs. Barrett, His Honor Judge Barry; Dr. Brown, of Port Gawler; Dr. Barry, Mr. Blandowski, Mrs. Major Davidson, Dr. Embling, Mr. V. Ellepe; Mr. G. Francis, Director of the Botanic Garden of Adelaide; Dr. Greeves; Sir William Hooker, of Kew; Mr. Hill, Director of the Botanic Garden of Brisbane; Mr. Hellicar, Mr. McArthur; Mr. Charles Moore, Director of the Botanic Garden of Sydney; Mr. McMillan, Mr. Pestell, Mrs. Colonel Robertson; Mr. John Rule, of Richmond; Dr. Rutter; Mr. Stephenson, of Heidelberg; Mr. Sargood, the late Mr. Simpson, Messrs. Smith and Adamson; Mr. Wade, of Launceston; and from the Director.

In former years donations to the Gardens have been received, according to the Curator's information, from Colonel and Captain Anderson; Mr. Bailey, of Adelaide; Messrs. Baptist, Blow, Blair, Burgenna, Bignell, Bush, Bridges, Bell, Bunce, Dr. Bowie, Mrs. Barker, Mr. Ball; Mr. Budlege, the Director of the Botanic Garden of Cape Town; Comte de Chabrillan, Mrs. Cobham, Captain Carey, Captain Cole, Mr. Cannon, Mr. D. S. Campbell, Dr. Coutts, Mr. Dallachy, Captain Dobson, Mr. Darsdale, Messrs. Ellis, Ebden, Mr. Fish, Mr. Freeman, Mr. Fowler, Mr. Faric, Mr. Fischer, Major Firebrace, Messrs. Guthridge, Griffin, Green, Messrs. Hyndman, Heyne; Sir William Hooker, of Kew; Dr. Hillebrand, Messrs. Hannaford, Hughes, Handyside, Hills, Hull, Dr. Howitt, Dr. Iffla, Mr. Jay, Captain Kemp, Captain Kay; Professor Lindley, of London; His Excellency Mr. La Trobe, Messrs. Mitchell, Mort; W. S. McLeay, of Sydney; Sir William McArthur, of Campden; Mr. McNaughton, Mr. Mathews, Major-General McArthur, Messrs. Macarthur, Maclauchland, Maine, Dr. Mueller, Mr. Nicolson, Mr. Ocock, Captain Pearson, Messrs. Powlett, Piper, Perry, Plumridge, Pitman, Pantan; Mr. Perry, of Mauritius; Messrs. Rowland, Rumble, Robertson, Ruffy, Roland, Mrs. Roe; Dr. Sonder, of Hamburg; Messrs. Shepherd, Swainson, Simmond, Stephenson, Steven, Stone, Seidel, Captain Sturt, Messrs. Turner, Thompson; Mr. Twaites, Director of the Botanic Garden of Ceylon; Colonel Valiant, Messrs. Watt, Wilhelmi, Were, Wright, Winter, Walters, and Wilson, and minor contributions from other gentlemen.

Four cases of living plants have been received this year from Mr. Charles Moore, Director of the Botanic Garden of Sydney; one from Mr. Wade, the Secretary of the Horticultural Society of Launceston; and one from Mr. Mort, of Sydney. Whilst from this Garden one case was forwarded to the Botanic Garden of Sydney, one to the Botanic Garden of Mauritius, and one to the Botanic Garden of Cape Town. With various Botanic Gardens cases of plants have been exchanged in former years.

The Acting Government Botanist, during his journey to the Grampians and Pyrenees, procured an extensive collection of seeds,

particularly valuable as containing many species hitherto nowhere under cultivation. Chiefly of this supply collections have been transmitted for interchange to the Royal Gardens of Kew, to the Melbourne University Garden, to the Botanic Gardens of Hobart Town, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Paris, Mauritius, Cape Town, Calcutta, Boston, and Hamburg.

Of seeds secured from our cultivated plants upwards of 100 collections have been distributed by the Curator, the greatest number of species being 150, the total number of packets more than 5100. These were allotted either to residents of the adjacent Colonies, or to the colonists of Victoria, and of various other parts of the globe; and it is to be hoped, and generally promised, that the recipients will endeavor to contribute by an apt equivalent to the increase of our own plants.

For several of the public reserves, avenues, and many gardens, plants or cuttings have been furnished at this season to a great extent, and these principally under the authority of the Office of Public Works.

Mr. John Walters, one of the foremen of the Garden, was despatched to Wilson's Promontory to obtain on a large scale ferns and young plants of the indigenous evergreen beech (Fagus Cunninghami), of the native Sassafras tree (Atherosperma moschatum), and of other trees and shrubs of that locality, either rare, useful, or ornamental. Through the aid kindly offered by the owners of the sawmill at Sealers' Cove he has been enabled to secure, besides a collection of timber specimens, a large number of young plants of forest trees, not only valuable as acquisitions to our Garden, but also for mutual interchange with similar institutions.

It is intended to devote a space of about three acres to an arrangement of plants according to the Natural System, in order to facilitate information on phytology, by demonstrating on living plants the mutual alliances which connect the members of the vegetable kingdom. The performance of this plan is already in progress.

Arrangements are also made for labelling the principal plants of this Garden in a distinct and instructive manner, and a hope is entertained of completing the greater part of this labor before the end of the present year.

It is contemplated to retain the south-eastern part of the Garden in its natural state, adding merely in the course of time a variety of evergreen and shady trees to the existing Eucalypti. The erection of a third conservatory, for intertropical plants destined for this locality, will no doubt soon contribute towards the embellishment of one of the most beautiful spots in the Garden.

On the steep declivities fronting the Yarra, and the western portion of the lagoon, a Pinetum will be reared, the locality, as a sheltered one, being not only favorable for the growth of the more tender pines, but also for an advantageous display of their noble forms. The southernmost portion of the ground is reserved partially for raising hereafter, as far as lies in our power, plants of such trees as recommend themselves for the formation of avenues along our public roads, or for plantations on

Government reserves. Another portion is destined for experiments on the cultivation of those plants which may prove of economical, medicinal, or commercial importance.

The large lagoon of the Garden (occupying a space of about eighteen acres) now offers to numerous water birds the only place of security in our neighborhood, whilst a multitude of land birds enliven our shrubberies.

A renewed commencement has been made by Dr. Embling to enlarge the variety of the former by the introduction of foreign birds, whilst, as regards the latter, an attempt has been made to add nightingales to their number.

Since my return from the North Australian Expedition an extensive correspondence has been opened or renewed with the administrators of various public gardens of Great Britain, on the European Continent, in America, and different Colonies, under a desire of obtaining additions to the plants hitherto accumulated on our ground.

In all cases where direct orders have been furnished for transmission of plants from gardens abroad, I have been anxious to see in the selection of plants beauty combined with utility; and when it is considered that under the mildness of our climate we may choose from the endless number of plants of the whole temperate and subtropical zone, and that even many from the warmest parts of the globe may be acclimatized in our latitudes, it will then be needless to show how wide a field is left for our progress, and we may trust that many of the future introductions into our Garden will not be without practical value to the Colony.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

FERD. MUELLER,
Director of the Botanic Garden.

The Honorable the President of the Board of
Land and Works, &c., &c., &c.

By Authority: John Ferres, Government Printer, Melbourne.